

**441—175.25(232) Child abuse assessment process.** An assessment shall be initiated within 24 hours following the report of child abuse becoming a case. The primary purpose in conducting an assessment is to protect the safety of the child named in the report. The secondary purpose of the assessment is to engage the child's family in services to enhance family strengths and to address needs, where this is necessary and desired. There are eight tasks associated with completion of the assessment. These are:

**175.25(1) *Observing and evaluating the child's safety.*** In instances when there is an immediate threat to the child's safety, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim named in the report within one hour of receipt of the report. Otherwise, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim within 24 hours of the report of child abuse becoming a case. When the alleged perpetrator clearly does not have access to the alleged child victim, reasonable efforts shall be made to observe the alleged child victim within 96 hours of receipt of the report. When reasonable efforts have been made to observe the alleged child victim within the specified time frames and the worker has established that there is no risk to the alleged child victim, the observation of the alleged child victim may be waived with supervisory approval.

**175.25(2) *Interviewing the alleged child victim.*** The primary purpose of an interview with the child is to gather information regarding the abuse allegation, the child's immediate safety, and risk of abuse.

**175.25(3) *Interviewing subjects of the report and other sources.*** Attempts shall be made to conduct interviews with subjects of the report and persons who have relevant information to share regarding the allegations. This may include contact with physicians to assess the child's condition. The child's custodial parents or guardians and the alleged perpetrator (if different) shall be interviewed, or offered the opportunity to be interviewed. The court may waive the requirement of the interview for good cause.

**175.25(4) *Gathering of physical and documentary evidence.*** Evidence shall be gathered from, but not be limited to, interviews, observations, photographs, medical and psychological reports and records, reports from child protection centers, written reports, audiotapes and their transcripts or summaries, videotapes and their transcripts or summaries, or other electronic forms.

**175.25(5) *Evaluating the home environment and relationships of household members.*** The evaluation may, with the consent of the parent or guardian, include a visit to the home where the child resides. If permission is refused, the juvenile court may authorize the worker to enter the home to observe or interview the child. An evaluation of the home environment shall be conducted during the course of the child abuse assessment. If protective concerns are identified, the child protection worker shall evaluate the child named in the report and any other children in the same home as the parents or other persons responsible for their care. Each case shall include a full description of information gathered during the assessment process. This description shall provide information which evaluates the safety of the child named in the report. If the child protection worker has concerns about a child's safety or a family's functioning, the worker shall conduct a more intensive assessment until those concerns are addressed. When an assessment is conducted at an out-of-home setting, an evaluation of the environment and relationships where the abuse allegedly occurred shall be conducted.

**175.25(6) *Evaluating the information.*** Evaluation of information shall include an analysis, which considers the credibility of the physical evidence, observations, and interviews, and shall result in a conclusion of whether or not to confirm the report of child abuse.

**175.25(7) *Determining placement on central abuse registry.*** A determination of whether the report data and disposition data of a confirmed case of child abuse is subject to placement on the central abuse registry pursuant to Iowa Code Supplement subsection 232.71D(3) shall be made on each assessment.

**175.25(8) *Service recommendations and referrals.*** During or at the conclusion of a child abuse assessment, the department may recommend information, information and referral, community care referral, or services provided by the department. If it is believed that treatment services are necessary for the protection of the abused child or other children in the home, juvenile court intervention shall be sought.

*a. Information or information and referral.* Families with children of any age that have confirmed or not confirmed abuse and low risk of abuse shall be provided either information or information and referral when:

- (1) No service needs are identified, and the worker recommends no service; or

(2) Service needs are identified, and the worker recommends new or continuing services to the family to be provided through informal supports; or

(3) Service needs are identified, and the worker recommends new or continuing services to the family to be provided through community agencies.

*b. Referral to community care.* With the exception of families of children with an open department service case, court action pending, or abuse in an out-of-home setting, a referral to community care shall be offered to:

(1) Families with children whose abuse is not confirmed when there is moderate to high risk of abuse, service needs are identified, and the worker recommends community care.

(2) Families with children that have confirmed but not founded abuse and moderate or high risk of abuse when service needs are identified and the worker recommends community care.

(3) Families with children with founded abuse, a victim child six years of age or older, and a low risk of repeat abuse when service needs are identified and the worker recommends community care.

*c. Referral for department services.* Families with children that have founded abuse and moderate to high risk of abuse and families with victim children under age six that have founded abuse and low risk of abuse shall be offered department services on a voluntary basis.

(1) The worker shall recommend new or continuing treatment services to the family to be provided by the department, either directly or through contracted agencies.

(2) Families that refuse voluntary services shall be referred for a child in need of assistance action through juvenile court.